News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Thursday, August 10, 2006

State Medicaid Program Saves Millions of Dollars

CHEYENNE – The director of the Wyoming Department of Health said today the state saved more than \$12.7 million in costs for its EqualityCare (Medicaid) program in 2005 through its Healthy Together health management program.

Wyoming's cost savings was calculated by comparing expenditures for clients in the EqualityCare (Medicaid) program with similar programs that do not have a health management program such as Healthy Together. Much of Wyoming's savings is due to a 13.6 percent decrease in emergency room services and a 15 percent decrease in inpatient admissions.

"While we are certainly pleased with these financial results for EqualityCare, it's even more important to me that Healthy Together's preventive approach is improving patient care and outcomes," said Dr. Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director.

Healthy Together focuses on teaching clients how to better care for themselves and their families, and supports them in following their doctors' recommendations. All Wyoming EqualityCare (Medicaid) clients are eligible to participate in the program, which is offered through a contract with APS Healthcare, a private company.

"When patients are more educated about their conditions and options, they make better choices," Sherard said. "That's the primary reason we have seen a reduction in expensive and unnecessary emergency room visits and fewer people repeatedly hospitalized with the same problems."

"Healthy Together has exceeded our expectations," said Teri Green, Wyoming EqualityCare manager. "Working with APS, we've been able to tailor our program to meet the needs of Wyoming's healthcare providers and our clients."

Green said Healthy Together includes programs for clients with asthma, coronary artery disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, chronic heart failure, depression and diabetes. The program's "health coaches" helped clients to achieve significant improvements in prevention measures such as diabetes testing, eye exams, glucose monitoring, statin usage, cholesterol monitoring, bronchodilator usage and other preventative treatments and testing to improve their overall health and wellness.

"We anticipate growing the program over the next few years to further avoid unnecessary program costs as we increase the quality of life for our clients," Green continued.

There is no cost to clients for the Healthy Together program and participation is voluntary. The program began in Wyoming in July 2004. The final 2005 financial and clinical results for Healthy Together were confirmed by Milliman, a global consulting and actuarial firm.

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